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ABSTRACT

Faced with reduced public funding, many two-year colleges are seeking money from government agencies and private foundations to change procedures or develop materials in areas that would otherwise be neglected. Simultaneously, several of the most well-known public and private funding sources are becoming increasingly receptive to proposals submitted by community colleges. However, while the total resources available are considerable, they are not sufficient to fund all of the worthwhile proposals. Obtaining funding requires identifying an important problem, locating an appropriate funding source, and presenting the idea effectively. Important steps in writing a proposal include planning the project, finding funding sources, properly organizing and writing the proposal, reviewing the proposal for consistency, and submitting the proposal. This digest presents information on each step of the process, including a list of institutions and publications for assistance in locating funding sources, a description of the four main elements of a proposal, and steps to take if the proposal is not funded. (MAB)

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Fact Sheet

ED353004

Proposal Writing for Two-Year Colleges

Faced with reduced public funding, many two-year colleges are seeking money from government agencies and private foundations to change procedures or develop materials in areas that would otherwise be neglected. Simultaneously, several of the most well-known public and private funding sources are becoming increasingly receptive to proposals submitted by community colleges. Examples of federal programs that fund projects in particular areas of interest are the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, and such Department of Education programs as the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education and the Strengthening Developing Institutions Program (Title III). Private foundations like the Kellogg Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Mott Foundation are also possible sources of funds for two-year colleges. In addition, local businesses and industries are worth investigating aspotential funders of projects for their nearby community college.

The many agencies that provide funds for projects cover a vast variety of interests, but an individual funding source may have a very limited scope of concern. Further, while the total resources available are large, they are certainly not sufficient to fund all of the worthwhile proposals that are prepared. Receiving funding requires identifying an important problem, locating an appropriate funding source for the topic, and presenting the idea effectively. This fact sheet offers a brief outline of the major steps required to secure funding.

HOW IS THE PROJECT PLANNED?

First, identify the institution's need and develop an idea of how the need can be met. The idea should be practical and of real importance in strengthening education at the institution. Next, discuss the idea with the individuals who will be involved in implementing the project. If sufficient interest is expressed and support seems to be forthcoming from the administration and faculty, locate a source of funding.

HOW DO I LOOK FOR A FUNDING SOURCE?

Finding a possible funding source is primarily a process of identifying a foundation or agency that has a history of funding projects in the same subject area or with a similar purpose. Consult your college or district development officer for information about public and private funding programs or investigate the resource organizations described below. Contact your state education agency as well, since a number of federal programs allocate funds to the states for use in supporting local projects in specific areas.

Most sources, especially government programs, have a pamphlet or booklet that describes their areas of interest and requirements in detail. Carefully examine the scope of concern and requirements of the possible sources of funds. Then send a brief (no more than two pages long) description of the project, including the objectives, to agencies and foundations which seem to be interested in similar projects. A program representative will be able to determine whether the project is appropriate.

WHERE CAN I OBTAIN ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT FUNDING SOURCES?

The following institutions and publications constitute a sample of the sources of valuable information about grantsmanship and public and private sources of assistance:

*The Foundation Center,
888 Seventh Avenue,
New York, NY 10019

The Foundation Center is a nonprofit organization which collects and disseminates information about foundation grants through the ``Foundation Directory'', the computer-searchable Foundation Grants Index, and regional library collections.

*Grant Information System (GIS)
2214 North Central Avenue
Phoenix, AZ 85004

GIS is a printed catalog of grants available from federal, state, and local government, and from public and private foundations and non-foundation corporations. In addition, the catalog is computer-searchable through the System Development Corporation and through Dialog.

*The Grantsmanship Center
1031 S. Grand Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90015

A nonprofit, educational institution, the Grantsmanship Center holds workshops, publishes guides, and produces the bimonthly ``Grantsmanship
Center News.''

*National Council on Resource Development (NCRD)
1875 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 1013 Washington, DC 20009

An affiliate council of the American Association of Community and Junior Colleges, NCRD publishes a series of resource papers on aspects of grantsmanship and offers other membership services, such as an annual membership directory.

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance

Published annually by the Office of Management and Budget, the catalog provides information about federal programs, including the objective of the program, how funds may be used, the activities which have been funded, eligibility requirements, and the application and award process.

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Chronicle of Higher Education

The weekly *Chronicle of Higher Education* includes regular columns announcing the deadlines occurring in the following three months for grant programs and listing informtion about grants recently awarded, including the awarder, the recipient, the purpose, and the amount of the award.

HOW IS THE PROPOSAL WRITING PROCESS ORGANIZED ?

A timeline with deadlines for each section of the proposal should be developed to ensure that all requirements are met by the time the proposal is due to the agency or foundation. The deadlines should be circulated to everyone involved in planning the project. Keep in touch with the agency or foundation representative so that any problems or questions can be resolved as quickly as possible.

WHAT ARE THE SECTIONS OF A PROPOSAL?

Although requirements differ, most proposals have these common features: 1) a project summary, 2) a narrative, 3) a budget statement and justification, and 4) appendices.

*Project Summary. The project summary, as well as the rest of the proposal, should be written in clear, precise language without the use of obscuring jargon. An accurate and complete description of the project objectives and procedures should be given with as much detail as possible in the length specified in the proposal guidelines.

*Narrative. The following points are usually addressed in the narrative: 1) a statement of the problem, 2) a review of the literature, 3) the project objectives, 4) the procedures, 5) the significance, 6) the evaluation method, 7) dissemination, 8) staff qualifications, and 9) the schedule of activities.

Statement of the Problem. A description of the topic addressed and an explanation of both the institutional and societal needs for the project should be provided. Relevant information about the institution can be used to demonstrate that the project is needed.

Review of the Literature. The literature review both supports the need for the project and shows evidence that the project planners have made a detailed investigation of prior attempts to meet the need. A search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database can simplify this research by providing a comprehensive view of the documents and journal articles on the subject. Many items that are especially useful for supporting proposals, such as final reports of federally funded projects and extensive government research reports on specific topics, are submitted to ERIC automatically.

Objectives. An explanation of what the project will accomplish should be provided in the narrative. These objectives should be realistic and follow directly from the statement of the problem.

Procedures. The procedures to be followed in conducting the project and the reasons for choosing these procedures should be explained in detail. The population involved, the methods used, and the materials developed are a few of the factors that should be discussed in this section.

Significance. A statement of what the project will add toexisting knowledge or how the project will improve current practices is included in the narrative to emphasize the importance of the project.

Evaluation. Most funding sources require some form of evaluation, usually external, to objectively determine what the project achieved and to ensure that any recommendations made as a result of the project follow from what actually took place. The evaluation should include both formative and summative components. In this section of the report, describe the evaluation process and identify the external evaluators either generally or, if possible, by name and title.

Dissemination. The process of disseminating the project findings or outcomes is described with the purpose of demonstrating the project's usefulness outside the originating institution. Include a statement that a description of the project or the final project report was submitted to ERIC.

Staff Qualifications. A paragraph should be included for each principal staff member detailing his or her educational background and relevant experience or expertise. The complete vitae of staff members can be included in the appendices.

Schedule of Activities. Frequently, the funding source requires the completion of a comprehensive schedule form showing an exact deadline for the accomplishment of each part of the project. If a form is not provided, this timeline should be included in the narrative.

Budget Statement and Justification. The budget should be accurate and realistic. Most funding sources have a detailed budget form with spaces for each category of expense that should be addressed. Categories that are usually included are personnel costs, including benefits; equipment costs; supply expenses; travel expenses; consultant fees; other expenses, including utilities, computer time, publication expenses, or other miscellaneous costs; and indirect costs, such as overhead. If you intend to use your collegecampus, find out if the college has a set overhead cost. The budget justification should support the budget figures and explain fully how the estimates were made in each category. The crediblilty of the budget can often add to the authority of the entire proposal.

Appendices. The appendices should contain any additional supporting material, such as the vitae of key personnel, background material on the institution, and letters of recommendation from community members or involved individuals. Be careful not to double the size of proposals with supporting material.

THE PROPOSAL IS WRITTEN, WHAT NEXT?

After the proposal is completed, an individual who has been closely involved in the planning process should read over the entire proposal carefully checking for consistency and continuity throughout the sections. The reader should also confirm that all the funding agency's and the college's requirements have been met. After any corrections have been made, and, if necessary, the proposal has been reviewed by the college's development office, the proposal is ready for submission to the agency or foundation where it will undergo the usual review and evaluation procedure of the funding source. Competition for funding is often very stiff. The thoroughness and care that went into the proposal can make it stand out from the hundreds that the evaluators receive.

WHAT IF THE PROPOSAL IS NOT FUNDED?

Many agencies and foundations will release a copy of the evaluators' comments to the submitters of unsuccessful proposals. These comments can provide valuable feedback and suggestions for improvement. Find out from a representative of the funding source whether the proposal can be revised and resubmitted. If so, look ahead to next year's competition.